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The Importance of Education.

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S T. T H O M A S 's,

J A N U A R Y 1. 1755.

For the Benefit of the

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By PHILIP FURNEAUX.

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301.



PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and, when he is old, he will not depart from it.



Tender and solicitous regard to the welfare of the rising generation, is a branch of that benevolence which, as men and christians, we are bound to entertain for the whole human race; and is, particularly, inculcated by the precepts and example of our Divine Master: who, according to the description given of him by the Evangelical Prophet, *fed his flock like a shepherd, gathering the lambs in his arms, and carry-*

Isai. xl
II.

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Mark x.
17.

ver. 21.

ing them in his bosom.—Accordingly, when he was accosted by the young Ruler with this question, *Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*

It is expressly observed, that *Jesus, beholding him, loved him.* And although it cannot be doubted, that this young man won upon his affection, on account of the errand on which he came to him, yet his critical circumstances, just at his entrance upon an ensnaring and dangerous world, were, most probably, another powerful motive to compassion, in the breast of our Divine Saviour.—In like manner, when his disciples censured those who brought their children to him, for his benediction or instruction, as if little children were beneath his attention, he corrects their mistaken jealousy for his honour.—*Suffer little children, saith he, to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God:* that is, the kingdom of God, or of the Messiah, which it was his main design to erect and establish, would, in all likelihood, at first be chiefly composed of young, or unprejudiced and undesigning persons: Those who were grown up to
matu-

Mark x.
14.

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maturity, and whose prepossessions and corruptions had taken deeper root, and gathered greater strength, being more in danger of resisting that accumulated evidence of his divine mission and heavenly doctrine, which to impartial upright minds was really irresistible.——And for the most part, this hath been the case in all succeeding generations. Christians therefore, in imitation of their blessed Lord, and as the most probable means of enlarging his kingdom, cannot well exceed in an affectionate concern for the young and unprejudiced; and in their endeavours to prevent their tender minds from lying waste, or being debauched by false principles, and to implant in them, as early as possible, the seeds of rational, substantial piety and religion.

It would be a glorious reward for the most painful and assiduous labours of the *ministers of Christ*, to be instrumental, in the hands of providence, in saving the rising generation from that general licentiousness, both in principle and practice, which, in these degenerate times, threaten

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ens to undermine all religion, natural as well as revealed, and even the very foundations of civil society: But it is, more especially, the duty and province of *parents* and *guardians* to attempt this. And though many causes of the declension of religion, and the prevalence of dissolute morals, may be assigned; I apprehend no one is more apparent, or more pernicious, than a general remissness in the *education* of children. Where all *private* instruction is neglected, and no pains is bestowed to open and form the mind at *home*, it is not to be expected that *publick* instructions should have the desired effect upon them, —because they cannot be so frequently repeated, and discourses, delivered in a mixed assembly, cannot be entirely adapted to the circumstances and understanding of children. Precepts of wisdom, therefore, should be gently and gradually insinuated, and fit opportunities should be watched and embraced for instilling them, that as the Prophet expresses it, *line may be upon line, and precept upon precept*: For which the words of the Text contain a very cogent reason, *Train up a child in the*

Isai.

xxviii. 10.

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the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. In further discoursing on which words, I shall proceed in the following manner :

I. Show the *extent* of this precept, or maxim of wisdom, *Train up a child in the way he should go.*

II. Evince the *reasonableness* of the duty here enjoined : And

III. Examine the *truth* of the *inference* drawn from it, or of the motive by which it is enforced ; that, *if we train up a child in the way he should go, he will not depart from it, even when he is old.* I am,

I. To consider the extent of this precept, or maxim of wisdom, *Train up a child in the way he should go.* And this may well be supposed to include,

i. That we should endeavour to teach children the art of self-government.—I apprehend, *the way in which we should go,*
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will readily be granted to mean, “ the path
 “ of life,” in the utmost latitude of that ex-
 pression, or that path, which is supposed to
 lead to our present and future happiness :
 Now it will not be easy to select any branch
 of duty, that hath a more considerable in-
 fluence on our real felicity, or that will be
 more likely to secure us in a *right path*,
 than a readiness in controuling our inclina-
 tions and passions, according to the dictates
 of our judgment and conscience : For, as
 the wise-man observes, *he, who hath no rule
 over his own spirit, is like a city broken
 down, and without walls : he is desolate,
 and dismantled, and exposed to every in-
 vader.*

Prov.
 xxv. 28.

Great care, therefore, should be early
 taken, to prevent children being humour-
 some, and self-willed ; which gradually
 ripens into a headstrong, untractable dispo-
 sition ; and causes them to be extremely
 uneasy and restless to themselves, and very
 troublesome to others.—To have their de-
 sires *moderate*, and confined within *reason-
 able* bounds, will occasion their being easi-
 ly advised and restrained, as well as pleased
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and obliged ; and be an inward spring of self-enjoyment, as well as anchor of security : Whereas being always craving for some new amusement, is like a *feverish thirst*, never to be allayed or satisfied. And many persons, through an injudicious fondness for their children, indulging them in all their weak and irregular inclinations, on a pretence of their youth, and the immaturity of reason ; occasion at length such a *collection of humours* in the mind, as are never afterwards entirely to be dispersed ; or at least, not without a very severe discipline. Brutes, (who are never able to reason, as mankind do,) have such a natural sagacity, as, by proper management, to become conscious (if I may use the expression) of their faults, or untoward behaviour : Much more may children be made so, and that earlier than is generally imagined.

And the surest way to obtain this influence over their minds, is not by a love of contradiction, or an undistinguishing thwarting and opposing all their inclinations ; but by a consistent, steady behaviour, showing

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an equal willingness to oblige in all *proper* cases, as a resolution not to yield in *improper* ones ; which will, at once, be a demonstration both of the wisdom and affection of the parents or guardians, and a motive to the esteem and reverence of children.— And the strongest inforcement of our rules of self-government will be our *example* : For the experience of all ages shows, that the best advices, and the warmest exhortations, if they have not the authority of the instructor's example, will prove ineffectual ; and the instructor himself become contemptible : And when a parent hath once rendered himself cheap and contemptible in the eyes of his children, he hath divested himself of all that authority and dignity, with which he is invested by nature, and is in danger of becoming, either the aversion, or terror, of his children:—In which case, he hath no principle to work on, but their *fear* : and this, of all motives and principles of obedience, is the very *worst* and *meanest* ; it will do little towards forming an *ingenuous* disposition of mind, because it carries no conviction of the fitness or expedience of a command, — nor, indeed, of any thing else, but of arbitrary power,

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power, in him who gives it; and when a person, thus awed, is from under the eye of his governor, having no restraint from within, he will be very apt to fly into the greater licentiousness and extravagance, for the unnatural violence, which, for a time, was put on him. The influence of *terror* should never, therefore, be employed, except in such desperate cases, where more mild and worthy motives have been often tried, and tried in vain. The great secret of education is, the forming the *temper*; that is, manuring the soil, and destroying those rank and noxious weeds, which if they are suffered to spring up, will choak the principles of wisdom, which may afterwards be ingrafted: For, if we take a view of the world, we shall observe, that men miscarry, not so much for want of knowing how it is right for them to act, as through impetuous humour, and ungoverned appetites and passions. No pains, therefore, can be too great, no attention too early, to prevent evil principles becoming habits, and to strengthen the sinews of self-government.

2dly,

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2dly, Children should be carefully trained up in the knowledge and practice of the social duties.—We are under various obligations from the relations in which we stand to our fellow-creatures; and on their being rightly discharged, the happiness of society in general, and of each individual, greatly depends. And the earliest instruction, in the principal branches of social conduct, is highly expedient.—

We are formed with a principle of *self-love*, (an apparently wise ingredient in our frame, and) which operates very early, and if not carefully watched, is in danger of degenerating into *selfishness*; an inordinate concern for our own happiness, and indifference to or neglect of the welfare of others. Children, therefore, should be early apprized, that the same obligations others are under to contribute to their happiness, they are under to contribute to the happiness of others:—We partake of one common nature; we enjoy the earth, and all its bounties and blessings, in common; and though, for the sake of order in society, persons are allowed what is called, their *distinct property*;

ty; yet, to extend our Saviour's observation, made for the sake of his own disciples, to the world in general; "He is Mat. xx. 26,—28.
" greatest, who (for a publick good) makes
" himself the least of all, and servant of all;
" as the son of man (the greatest person-
" age that ever dwelt on earth) came not
" to be ministered unto, but to minister,
" and to give his life a ransom for many."

—The *Lacedemonians*, a very wise people, made the education of their children a branch of the care of the state: And if any citizen, out of an extraordinary tenderness and indulgence, would not permit his sons to be brought up according to their strict discipline and institutions, he was straightways *disfranchised*. But no institution ever inculcated a publick spirit, and all social duties, more strongly, than does the *Christian religion*: *All things*, says Matt. vii. 12.
Christ, whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law, and the Prophets. The strictest and most impartial *justice*, and the most extensive and unlimited *benevolence*, ought to be early inculcated on the minds of children.—They should be taught, as an important lesson, that their happiness consists,

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sists, very little, comparatively, in the abundance of outward enjoyments, but very much, in a readiness of mind to act a part becoming reasonable and social creatures.—Observations on the moral and social conduct of mankind, and the apparent influence their behavior hath on their happiness, or misery, may be familiarly introduced in conversation, by way of caution, in some cases; and of laudable emulation, in others.—The social duties and virtues should be represented as of the highest consequence: For, though they have been too much disparaged, by many who call themselves Christians, yet the Holy Scriptures as strongly inculcate them upon us, as they do, *walking humbly with our God.*

And besides these *general* duties, which we owe to all men, and every man alike, the duties of *particular relations* should be explained, and enforced;—such as, obedience to parents, reverence to superiors, affection to relatives, gratitude to benefactors, an obliging carriage to equals, and humility and condescension to inferiors.—And if parents are able to sow the seeds of these
graceful

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graceful and amiable dispositions in their tender minds, though at the expence of some of their *personal pleasures*, the good fruit produced will be more than an equivalent for the greatest self-denial, and will prove a harvest of perpetual satisfaction. But then they should always remember,

3dly, That they are to teach them the knowledge and practice of religion. — Religion, in the general acceptation of the term, is that profound homage, and implicit obedience, which intelligent creatures owe to their creator and sovereign. And by *the way in which we should go*, Solomon certainly intended religion, or an impartial, though imperfect, obedience to the will of God, according to the dispensation under which he lived ; for this he always represents to be the truest wisdom, and of the highest (indeed of infinite and eternal) importance to mankind. And whoever is perswaded that the same impartial obedience to the divine will, under the last and best dispensation of God's mercy to a fallen world, is the only solid basis on which the happiness of reasonable and degenerate creatures can be founded, (especially, if on this conviction of its importance,

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he hath devoted *himself* to God through a mediator,) such a man, one may well suppose, will be solicitous, that his offspring should early understand, and regard the Christian revelation. To this end,

Begin with the plainest, most intelligible, most indisputable principles; such as when they are understood, carry conviction along with them; such as are most likely to convey a lively sense of the divine majesty and glory, and such as may engage the mind to reverence, love, and delight in God and the Redeemer; such as may incline it to desire a further knowledge of the divine will, and of the discoveries which God hath made of himself to his creatures.—Avoid, as much as may be, loading or perplexing the minds of children, with abstruse speculations, or things which have generally been controverted amongst Christians: It will be time enough for them to look into such matters, when they come to riper understanding.—Perhaps, it will be said, “I esteem some such things of great importance, and that I cannot begin to teach them too soon.” I answer, I blame no one for teaching his child, what he thinks his

his child can understand, if he also apprehends it of importance he should understand and believe it. But if it be really disputed among men of learning and understanding, and approved goodness of life, I somewhat wonder, any one should apprehend it necessary, that a child, while a child, should understand and believe it.

However, it is a maxim in all sciences, to begin with the easiest principles *first*; and sure I am, the time of education will not be ill spent, if those things only should be learnt, if they are *well* learnt, which only libertines and infidels have disputed.

But if any make it an objection, that there is not a single principle in religion, which hath not been disputed, even the very being of God, and the essential differences between good and evil,—I shall only answer, that unless, because every thing may have been disputed, it follows, that nothing is true; I see no reason, why things generally acknowledged to be plain and important, may not be inculcated on children: and, sure, such things are more fit to be in-

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culated, than what by many are allowed to be doubtful.

After all, it will well deserve the serious consideration of parents, to adapt their instructions to the capacities and proficiency of their children, so as to give them a relish of divine knowledge, and if possible, that their thirst after it may increase, by some experience of the pleasures of religion.— Teach them their own ignorance, and weakness, and liableness to err and be mistaken.— Teach them to pray, from a conviction of their constant need of divine illumination and guidance.— Above all, teach them, that the essence of religion consists, in a heart devoted and resigned to the will of God, and a life consecrated to his honour.

I am aware, it may be said by many ; we have not *capacities* for instructing our children in all these things, and we have not *leisure*.—To the *first*, I would answer, Make use of the capacities you have, and you will find them increase.—To the *latter*, If your circumstances in the world are so low, that you have not some minutes in the day, to devote to such a purpose, they are

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are low indeed. The *Israelites* were commanded to teach the law to their children, *as they sat in their houses, and as they walked along with them, and as they were going to bed, and rising.*—Time, redeemed from recreation or rest, for such purposes, is well improved, and will afford many pleasing reflections.

But what shall I say to such parents, who have capacities for all kinds of business, and leisure for all sorts of diversion, but have no leisure or capacity, to train up their children—? who send them, to schools, to be out of their way, that they may not interrupt their more important affairs, I mean, their parties of pleasure, and their pursuits of ambition—? who send them to schools to furnish their heads with languages, or sciences, and fit their hands for business, but leave their hearts unmanured, and uncultivated? I do not say this, to detract from the merit and usefulness of schools, or of the learning taught in them. But I apprehend, that they are now-a-days supposed to be *alone* sufficient to answer the purposes of education; and that, instead of coming in *aid* of parental culture, for which they were

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originally intended, they are substituted in *stead* of it. This is a growing evil.—It is better, I confess, that some children should be sent any where, rather than remain at home, eye-witnesses how their parents waste a great part of their time in *cards*, and other idle amusements. But I wonder, such parents, or any parents, should expect, that masters and tutors, who profess only to follow the employment for a livelihood, should do their own duty, and the parents too; should do that, for hire, which the parent declines, though impelled to it by the natural love of his children,—by the hopes of seeing them grow up in all human and divine graces, and worthily possess the fortune he may happen to leave them.—Education is a *personal* trust, lodged in a parent, and which cannot be delegated to another, but in cases of absolute necessity, or of very apparent benefit to the child. Nor *can* the master do what the parent *may*; nor hath he that natural authority, or that natural affection; which (sometimes one, and sometimes the other) may be needful to set home the very best instructions. Indeed, very few masters are desired, or expected, to form the minds, or manners, of youth; but

but only to improve their understandings. And few men are equal to the task, if they were desired; especially where the number of their scholars, or pupils, is considerable. I proceed,

II. To consider the reasonableness of the duty here enjoined; of *training up our children in the way they should go*. And,

The *first* observation I shall make, is, That the minds of youth are plainly unfurnished by nature.—When we first come into the world, our minds are a kind of *blank spaces*, that will admit of any thing being drawn upon them; or *rough materials*, that may be moulded into almost any form. The mind of man will proceed, very slowly, in the acquisition of intellectual or moral furniture, if it receives no foreign assistance: yet, as the bodily eye is capable of vision, so is the intellectual eye, of knowledge; but suitable objects must, in both cases, be presented in a proper point of view, before there can be any acquaintance with those objects. Now it is the business of a good education, to select, and propose, such objects to the mind, as are most

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most worthy of its attention, as will furnish it with the most useful ideas, and have a direct tendency to its improvement and perfection. We are all sensible, how much it facilitates the proficiency and progress, of persons of the most improved understandings, to be well *led*, in any new art and science, which they are desirous of learning: how much more then, must it be happy for the untrained and inexperienced youth, to have a wise and faithful leader! — And the minds of children, are not merely by nature unfurnished with knowledge, but they discover, for the most part, the seeds of corrupt and untoward dispositions, which must be eradicated as early as possible.—And surely, if parents were sensible, that the human mind is in so wild and disordered a state, as it really is, they would think it needful to employ more care, and cultivation, than they usually do, to furnish and enrich it, with useful knowledge, and divine dispositions: Whereas, if we may judge from their conduct, their imagination is, that the seeds of all that is excellent, are originally implanted by the God of nature, and in due season, will spring up spontaneously, without any human

man care or cultivation. And if this were the case, education would, indeed, be superfluous, and might be prejudicial,—since we might marr the divine workmanship by our intermeddling: but as the case is far otherwise, the neglect of this important concern is utterly inexcusable.

2dly, The culture and furnishing of the mind is, as much, the duty of parents and guardians, as the providing for the bodily wants, and of equal importance to the happiness of children.—*They* would be very justly charged with inhumanity, who should refuse, to their own offspring, those tender parts of themselves, necessary food or raiment: but how many leave their *minds* naked, and starved? If the happiness of mankind really depends more, on the endowments and dispositions of the mind, than it does, on the abundance of outward accommodations,—how strange is it, to see parents infinitely anxious to amass estates for their children, and yet negligent of their education! It is recorded of *Crates*, an ancient philosopher, that he was wont to say, that if he could get up to the highest place in the city, he would lift up his voice, and
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make proclamation, "What mean you, fellow-citizens, that ye turn every stone to scrape wealth together, and take so little care of your children, to whom one day you must relinquish it."—Let parents seriously consider, what will be most for the honour and happiness, of themselves, and their children, to leave them as great a fortune as possible, (an aim which hath proved the destruction of a thousand families,) and to let them take their chance for mental endowments and moral dispositions, —or to make their strongest efforts to instil into them just principles, and amiable dispositions, and trust more to providence what they shall leave them. I apprehend, in most cases, that reasonable care may be taken in both respects; but I well know, that, whenever they come in competition, *that* is generally postponed, which ought to be preferred: and thus many a child hath been sacrificed to the *vanity* of the parent, and a secret pride of making his children rich, miscalled his affection for them: such affection, as hath been more hurtful to them, than if he had at once exposed and deserted them.

3dly, It is no objection against education; that, in some cases, part of the furniture may hereafter be found useless, or troublesome, and inconvenient; but what is stronger against neglect: that is, many parents will teach their children superstitious notions and opinions, or inculcate absurd principles and sentiments, if they attempt to instruct them at all.—Admitting this to happen in many cases, yet it is an objection, which if it proves any thing, proves a great deal too much: it lies against instruction in general, as well of grown persons, as of children. For, whoever is entertained as an instructor, will be treated with some deference, and hath an opportunity afforded him, of propagating error, as well as truth, with very considerable advantage. I would ask the objector, *When* he will allow children to begin to *hear*, or *read* any thing? For they *will* hear, and read, though they should not be formally instructed: and will common discourse, or common books, which they may chance to meet with, be more *pure*, freer from false and absurd opinions, than the instructions of their parents? If, to avoid the disadvantage of a wrong and mistaken education, we afford our children

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dren no education at all, the consequence is, that they will fall into the hands of the most dangerous of all instructors, I mean, *indolence*, and *idleness*, *evil customs*, and *examples*, and their own boisterous and untutored *passions*: and can a man, who hath ever felt the yearning of a *parent's bowels*, expose his children to such inevitable destruction, from a vain apprehension, that part of their education may hereafter appear superfluous, or pregnant with some inconveniences?

4thly, No considerable improvements are likely to be made without it.—Experience testifies, that men seldom make any remarkable progress, any figure, in the sciences, or in business, or in any profession, if they have not been favoured with early instruction and education. And the case is precisely the same in morals and religion. If persons have not been early guided by the hands of wisdom, and restrained by a virtuous discipline, they ordinarily contract such idle, or corrupt habits, as cannot afterwards be easily subdued.—Life is short; we cannot, therefore, begin any work too soon, we are desirous of compleating.—
Forming

Forming and finishing a man, is no easy work, nor to be compassed in a short time: we, therefore, cannot set about it too early. If we lay a good foundation of self-government, social virtues, and religious principles, in our children, we may hope for a noble superstructure. And, surely, if we have any laudable ambition of excelling, ourselves, we shall be desirous, that our children also may excel, in whatever is valuable and praise-worthy.

5thly, The sentiments and practice of the wisest men, in all ages, is an argument in favour of an early good education.—In the words of the text we have the opinion of *Solomon* upon this head, to whom *God* had given a wise and an understanding heart. And long before the days of *Solomon*, *God* himself bears this honourable testimony concerning *Abraham*, *I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.* I have already hinted at the sentiments and practice of the antient heathens; and if it were needful, I might produce many express passages from heathen poets, philosophers and lawgivers,

Gen.
xviii. 19.

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to the same purpose. With this view *Horace* observes, 'That a vessel will long retain the scent, which it received from the liquor it first contained.'* And *Quintilian* remarks, 'That we are exceeding tenacious of what we imbibed early.' And again, 'That as our limbs, when young, are very pliant and flexible, and may be formed to attitudes and habits, which we cannot attain in after-life; so it is with our minds.'† And in earlier times *Socrates* mentioned the education of children, in those articles which would render them useful in the world, and form them to every possible degree of goodness, as an essential branch of the parental duty.‡ And I might appeal to the whole stream of history, that education was esteemed of the highest importance among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, and in every civilized nation.—And, surely, it is a good argu-

* *Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem Testa diu.*———*Hor. Ep. 2. Lib. 2.*

† *Et natura tenacissimi sumus eorum quæ rudibus annis percipimus.* *Quint. Orat. Lib. 1. Cap. 1.*

Ut corpora ad quosdam membrorum flexus formari uti- si tenera non possunt, sic animos quoque, &c. *Ibid,*

‡ *Xenoph. Mem. Lib. 1. Cap. 2. § 6.*

argument in favour of any practice, that different and contrary as men's opinions have been on other points ; no nation, or number of men, ever thought it was unnecessary or hurtful ; but on the contrary, men of all ages and countries, with one consent, have recommended, that early care should be taken to form the minds of children. Allow me to add,

6thly, and lastly, That the most dreadful inconveniences are seen to follow from the neglect of education.—I might here draw an affecting scene, taken from the life in many families within our own knowledge, but the task would be too invidious. Certain it is, that the want of good instruction, and of laudable examples, and of wise and reasonable restraints, hath been the ruin of thousands, who might, otherwise, have bid fair for happiness, both in this world, and that which is to come. Idleness is the canker of the soul ; it causes it to rust and moulder away, and prevents its being employed to any useful purposes ; it leaves the young creature a prey to every lust, and every seducer ; it leaves it ignorant of its own interest, and of its danger, and incapable

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pable of its own defence.—I know, it may be said, “ That all we can do, will not be
 “ effectual without the grace of God ; and
 “ that some of those, who have had the
 “ best education, have turned prodigals.”

All this is very true. But if it proves any thing, it proves too much ; it is an argument against using any means of religion whatsoever, by those who are of full age, as well as by those who are young : for it is not in the power of man to command success, and no means will be effectual without the grace of God. Events we must leave to *him* ; into his hands, and to his mercy, we must commit both ourselves, and our children ; and there we may safely and chearfully leave, both ourselves, and them, when we have discharged our own duty. But in ordinary cases, we shall find the present reward of our fidelity. And should it be otherwise, (as it possibly may in some particular and extraordinary circumstances,) there cannot be any such consolation over a *lost* child, as to be able to reflect, “ He hath not perished through my negligence.” But I am,

III. To consider the truth of the inference

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rence drawn, or the force of the motive suggested, in the text, that *if we train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it.* And this will appear by observing,

‘ That in early youth the mind is most open to conviction and instruction.’ Children are in this respect like the *Athenians*, Acts xviii. 21. *disposed to spend their time in telling or bearing some new thing*; and whatever first bespeaks their attention, engages it. There is a desire and thirst of knowledge, and instruction, which is natural to the mind of man; the mind, as it were, waits and expects to receive it, and hath not as yet contracted that undue opinion of its own sufficiency, which, afterwards, may set it above counsel and admonition. Now this is a very favourable circumstance, that renders the season of youth, peculiarly, a season of discipline and education. *Whom*, Isai. xxviii. 9. *saith the prophet Isaiah, shall he teach knowledge, and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them, that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.* But I add,

‘ That

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‘ That the mind is also free from prejudice in the more early part of life.’ We are then sure of a fair and favourable hearing, and have an opportunity of making the *first* impression : whereas when persons are grown to mature age, they will insensibly have imbibed particular attachments and prejudices, which may not be easily overcome.—We must all be sensible, how great an advantage it is, to have to deal with open, ingenuous persons, such as are willing to attend to our reasons and admonitions, who are free from artifice, and have the least bias, to incline them a contrary way.—Our endeavours, therefore, to instil knowledge, and give a right turn to the heart, can never begin too early. The sooner we make our attempt, the more likely are we to succeed : wisdom may possibly gain admittance, and take a lasting possession, if she come time enough to keep out that rabble of hurtful lusts, which if once they have broke in, will try all their art and strength to exclude her.

Again, ‘ The impression made by instruction in the earliest season of life, is likely

ly to be lasting, because the mind is tender.' The younger we are, the more yielding and flexible is the human mind, the more easily impressed and impregnated, and the more apt to remain in the shape to which it is then formed and moulded; for the impression it receives in this tender condition is much more distinct and durable, than any it can receive afterwards. All who are advanced in years, know, how hard it is to retain what they endeavour to learn when they are old. *Can the Æthiopian change his skin, saith the prophet, or the leopard his spots? then may they also do good, who have been accustomed to do evil.* Jer. xiii. 23.

Moreover, 'Childhood is a time of leisure and freedom from anxiety and care.' Learning most commonly is the only business of children, and if properly managed, may be made a pleasure instead of a toil and labour. And the spirits of children are generally brisk and lively, so that nothing lies with weight on their minds to prevent their attention to such instructions as are given them. The whole vigour of the mind may be turned into this channel, if instruction be given early; but when the cares of the

E world

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world come upon us, it is often as much as we can do, to stand up under the burden.

Finally, ' Experience teaches us, that what we learn in early life, is hardly ever forgotten.' If those who are grown up in life, examine, how it is with themselves, they will find they are most expert at what they learned when they were young, are most tenacious of the principles they imbibed, and of the customs they were addicted to, in early life : and there is no arguing against experience ; it will submit to no evasions, or subtile and specious distinctions. — He who hath had a good education, knows the value of it ; — he who hath wanted it, may know he hath a loss that is unspeakable and irretrievable.

On the full conviction therefore, of the truth I have been now enforcing, let parents seriously consider the importance of their trust, and the shortness of the season for discharging it ; and resolve that, by divine assistance, they will if possible, repair their past neglects, by double diligence for the future. They will certainly do this, under the persuasion I have been endeavouring

ing to work in their minds, unless they are divested of that natural affection, which God hath implanted in all creatures towards their offspring. For if they are indeed tenderly concerned for the present and future welfare of their children, if they are convinced that their education is of the highest importance to it, and that, through divine grace, it may be productive of the most glorious fruits; what should hinder their attempting it? — or how will they answer it to their own consciences, if the love of their children, implanted in their breasts by the God of nature for the noblest purposes, excite them only to provide for their bodily wants, or external embellishments? The wisest manner in which it is possible for parents to exert their affection to their children, is giving them the best education they are able, not merely to qualify them for making a figure in some useful, or gainful art, or learned science or profession, but for acquiring and maintaining an eminent and illustrious moral and religious character, suitable to the dignity of their immortal natures, and the glorious principles and hopes of our holy religion. And this is not merely a just expression of parental

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tal affection, but in christian parents, an indispensable duty ; an obligation, peculiarly incumbent on those, who in baptism have solemnly inrolled the names of their children in the register of *Christ's* disciples, and intreated for them an interest in the privileges of the Christian covenant. And can this desire be any better than a solemn mockery, if it be not followed with their strenuous endeavours, by God's assistance, that their children may be *partakers* of that *divine nature* which is necessary to their inheriting the *promises*? What can such a dedication amount to, less than a solemn and express stipulation to *bring up* their children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*? If such therefore, are wholly negligent and remiss in the discharge of this important trust, they intail the curse of their own broken vows both upon themselves, and their children.

2 Pet. i.
4.

Eph. vi.
4.

And if education be thus important, as it certainly is, in every condition of life, this will point out to us one of the most useful and valuable methods of distributing our charity ; I mean the encouraging nurseries of education, in which the children of the poor are instructed

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instructed in a manner suitable to their rank and circumstances. — And in this connection, allow me to recommend to your benevolent regards, the case of the charity-school in this neighbourhood, the children of which are now before you.

The present state of the school.

“ THE foundation of it was laid in
“ the year 1687, in the reign of
“ king *James* the second, when a school
“ was set up by one *Poulton* a jesuit, and
“ publick notice was given, that he would
“ instruct the children of the poor *gratis* :
“ upon which Mr. *Arthur Shallet*, Mr.
“ *Samuel Warburton*, and Mr. *Ferdinando*
“ *Holland*, laid the foundation of this
“ school, to provide for the instruction of
“ the children of the poor in protestant
“ principles.

“ The number of the scholars at first
“ was 40, afterwards increased to 50, and
“ at length to 180. They are taught to
“ read, write, and cast accompts, and in-
“ structed in the principles of our *com-*
“ *mon christianity*. — It may be said to be
“ the

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“ the first school the protestant dissenters
 “ were concerned in. —

“ It is situate in a very poor neighbour-
 “ hood, and the children of watermen, fish-
 “ ermen, and others, are here received,
 “ *without distinction of parties*; and are
 “ taught, and furnished with books, with-
 “ out any expence to their parents.

“ The Charges have been defrayed by
 “ the gifts and subscriptions of private per-
 “ sons, by an annual collection in this
 “ place, and another in the city, together
 “ with some occasional donations, in the
 “ last wills of those who have been disposed
 “ to encourage so useful a charity.”

Should I add nothing of my own by way
 of exciting your compassion on this occasi-
 on, it might seem an indecent indifference
 in one who appears as an advocate for this
 charity; while to suggest any thing new
 would be difficult, and to expatiate long on
 topicks that have frequently been insisted
 on, might betray an unbecoming distrust of
 your liberality. It may suffice, I hope,
 that I remind you,—The school is founded
 on

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on a catholick plan,—is situate in a very poor part of this trading borough,—is solely confined to the business of instruction, and extends not to raise the children above the meanest occupations.

Let me then adjure those of you who are parents, by the tenderness you feel for your own offspring, to reflect what it is to be young, and poor, and friendless; and hereupon to contribute towards furnishing these young strangers with a *staff*, and a *lamp*, to guide and sustain them in passing through this wilderness, upon which they are just entering.—And to those who have no children of their own, I would say, the children of the poor are yours; and that you take some care of them, is a debt that you owe to your country.—And O! may that God, *who hath fed us all our lives long unto this day, and who hath redeemed us from all evil, bless the children*; and dispose us to bless them according to our respective abilities, by ministering to them of our substance, in humble acknowledgment of his manifold kindness to us, of which we have been utterly unworthy. Thus shall *the blessing of them who for lack of knowledge might otherwise*

Gen.
xlvi. 15.

Job.
xxix. 13.]

wise

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wife perish, come upon us; and we shall cause the widow's trembling heart to sing for joy; and it is not impossible, that the poor boon which we may this day bestow, may hereafter be acknowledged in the most grateful and harmonious accents, as instrumental, under the influence of divine grace, in training up some of these poor children to a meetness to become citizens of the heavenly Zion.

T H E E N D.



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A SERMON to young persons, preached at *St. Thomas's, Southwark, December 25, 1754,* by **HENRY READ.**

